

Dissension in the ranks?

THE ANGLICAN

In July this year the Anglican Bishop of Natal, the Rt Rev Michael Nuttall, claimed that the views expressed by Bishop (now Archbishop) Desmond Tutu on sanctions, disinvestment and violence were in his "personal" capacity and did not represent those of the Anglican Church as a whole. The Anglican Church, Bishop Nuttall stressed, had not called for economic sanctions against South Africa and "... we grieve over every type of violence in our society..." Bishop Tutu had "called for sanctions in his personal capacity..." and had "reasons" for this which ought to be respected and not condemned. (Business Day, July 29, 1986 and The Citizen, July 30 — Sapa reports.)

He was commenting on an address made by the King of the Zulus, Goodwill Zwelithini, in which the King (an Anglican) was highly critical of various church endorsements for sanctions and warned of "preachers of the Gospel" increasingly being seen urging people to support the politics of desperation and the politics of violence "under the cloak of religion..."

It should be noted that the King made no mention whatsoever of Bishop Tutu in his address and it was Bishop Nuttall who brought his name into the issue in his critical reply to the King's speech. There are more than two million Anglicans in South Africa of all races and Bishop Nuttall was obviously referring to stances of the Anglican Church in SA.

Again in July, Anglican leaders in the United Kingdom voted overwhelmingly for economic sanctions against South Africa. (The Natal Mercury, July 8,

1986, The Citizen, July 8, 1986 — Sapa and Associated Press reports).

In York, Church of England leaders voted 394-21 with 12 abstentions after a three-hour debate at the regular summer session of the general synod — the policy-making body of bishops, clergy and laity. At the synod meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, the spiritual head of the church and leader of the world's 70 million Anglicans, said he had received a personal telex from Bishop Tutu — then Bishop of Johannesburg.

The Anglican Primate said Bishop Tutu had cabled: "Please, please help us. Thank you for your concern and caring about our situation. We know that justice and goodwill will prevail and that there is nothing they can do against the church of God. Not even hell can prevail against it."

The approved resolution from the church's board for social responsibility said that to help bring about a non-racial democratic South Africa the British Government should "deploy effective economic sanctions." It said banks and business corporations should do everything they could, including withdrawing from the South African economy, to increase the pressure.

The resolution was strongly endorsed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

There were a few speakers against sanctions, led by a Conservative MP, Sir William van Straubenzee, a Church Estates Commissioner, who likened the synod debate to any he could have heard at the Trade Unions Congress.

There were cries of "shame on

you" when an amendment condemning acts of violence by the SA Government and the African National Congress (ANC) was narrowly rejected on a show of hands.

The ANC received what appeared to be approval from delegates for resorting to violence after "trying for a long time for a peaceful approach..."

Meanwhile, and also in July, the US Catholic Conference wrote to the US Senate endorsing legislation mandating sanctions against South Africa.

The stand taken by the hierarchy of the Anglican church, Bishop Nuttall's defensiveness, backing for Archbishop Tutu's "personal" views, and criticism of the comments made by King of the Zulus, (see full report further on) has opened considerable debate in both the Anglican and Catholic churches in SA. Regrettably, no general ballot of rank-and-file opinion within these churches has been undertaken.

Typical letters to the Press from professed Anglicans are often highly critical of Archbishop Tutu. Newspaper reports have quoted Anglicans as saying they will withhold contributions and others have said they have stopped going to church.

Mr Gordon Steward, an Anglican, wrote a letter to the Press (Citizen, August 20, 1986) saying he had increased his monthly stop-order (to the church) in order to "compensate for those who have mistakenly withdrawn their own offerings."

He said he believed that "God in his wisdom will judge Bishop Tutu as indeed He will judge us..."

He added: "However

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desirable it is to have a Bishop who is universally liked and respected, we do not worship Bishops or any other priest. This rule also applies to the Roman Catholic's whose church has survived some quite appalling Popes throughout her long history.

"To withhold contributions to diocesan funds or to withdraw from Sunday worship is, in fact, elevating Bishop Tutu to a Godly level. Even if one considered him to be the greatest prelate that ever lived this would be an act of idolatory.

"My personal opinion of Bishop Tutu as a politician is much the same as my opinion of around 98 percent of South African politicians . . . disastrous."

Countless other letters to the Press indicate a deep anxiety among Christian South Africans over the political profiles of Archbishop Tutu and other church leaders.

A letter in the black newspaper City Press (June 22, 1986) from E M Allison of Johannesburg said: "Like J M Dobsons of Bluff (City Press, May 25) I am an Anglican parishioner. But unlike him/her I do not condone Bishop Desmond Tutu's call for economic sanctions against SA.

"Can true Christians like Tutu really believe that Christ — who loves all people — think we can condone sanctions which would result in the loss of jobs for many?

"Christ would never say "sorry there'll be no food for you because the Roman authorities aren't doing what they should."

"Tutu must not forget his own words: "Let us not be ashamed of our actions after we have achieved liberation . . ."



The Archbishop of Canterbury — endorsed sanctions vote.